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ABSTRACT

Mentoring is defined as the process of developing people in organizations. Successful mentoring occurs when top-level executives teach selected junior persons the rules of the game; provide opportunities for them to demonstrate their skill; challenge them; give them critical performance feedback; and sponsor them into higher level positions. This book, which grew out of a field-based research project (Project Mentor) funded by the Women's Educational Equity Act, was written to guide executives assuming the mentor role. The project explored the nature of mentoring from the mentor's perspective. Corporation heads, university presidents, and top-ranking regional government administrators recognized for their ability to identify and promote talent were assembled to discuss the mentoring process and its role in career advancement. One-on-one interviews, formal reports, and anecdotal records helped executives examine and describe their mentoring techniques. Proteges' also shared their insights. Each chapter of the book isolates an important aspect of mentoring. Chapter 1 examines mentoring benefits for both organization and mentor. Chapters 2 through 4 tackle the issues of selecting proteges, beginning and ending the relationship, structuring a workable mentorship, and mentoring women and minorities. Chapter 6 explains myths, issues and strategies involved in establishing an organizational mentorship program. (MLH)

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Executive Mentoring

Myths

Issues

Strategies

University of Tennessee
Knoxville, Tennessee

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Issues
Strategies

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PREFACE

Increasingly, mentoring is recognized as a way of making wiser choices about the future leaders of an organization. Early identification of talented individuals with the potential to advance allows top-level executives to fully assess the individuals. In addition, junior-level executives acquire the experiences and training necessary to develop their talents. As positions become available, candidates are already prepared to "step-in" with the knowledge and experience the organization needs.

Mentoring, as we use it in this book, is about the process of developing people in organizations. Successful mentoring occurs when top-level executives teach selected junior persons "the rules of the game"; provide opportunities for them to demonstrate their skill; challenge them; give them critical performance feedback; and if ready, sponsor them into higher level positions.

Despite the popularity of the topic and the large number of professional articles devoted to mentoring, there is little to guide executives as they assume the role of mentor. This book fills the gap by examining every aspect of the mentoring relationship and by clearly identifying the issues mentors face. More importantly, it provides specific strategies for managing the process effectively. This book is, in the truest sense, a manual on mentoring for mentors.

This manual is specifically designed for top-level executives who recognize the potential of mentoring for their organizations. For these senior-level persons, the book clarifies the mentoring process and provides them with guidelines for helping others in the organization to mentor.

HOW THE BOOK EVOLVED: PROJECT MENTOR

This book grew out of a field-based research project funded by the Women's Educational Equity Act, U.S. Department of Education.

Project Mentor sought to identify the nature of mentoring from the perspective of mentors—to assess their needs, determine the problems they face, examine the role mentoring plays in their organizations, and identify factors that would explain why women and minorities have not been mentored to the same extent as others.

Heads of corporations, presidents of universities, and top-ranking administrators of regional governmental agencies, recognized for their ability to identify and promote talent, were assembled to discuss the process of mentoring and the role it plays in career advancement. The executives identified the problems they had seen emerge in mentoring relationships, especially among other junior or senior executives in the organization. These problems most often related to *what to do* and *how to do it*. Two problems identified throughout the discussions were the absence of any guidelines for mentoring and the lack of attention given to mentoring from the perspective of the mentor. Indeed, these executives were acutely aware of the lack of any specifics to guide them. The need for guidelines was underscored as they selected protégés in their organizations to mentor.

During the mentoring experiences, one-on-one interviews, formal reports, and anecdotal records helped the executives consciously examine and describe to us the techniques they were using in mentoring their protégés, how they were mentoring, and why. Similarly, protégés shared their insights into the process through one-on-one interviews, written reports, and a closing meeting that brought mentors, protégés, and project staff together to discuss the entire Project Mentor experience.

This book grew out of the discussions and shared experiences of the mentors and the reflections and perspectives of the protégés. It is the first book that deals with mentoring from the mentor's point of view. As such, it comprehensively tackles questions about the mentoring process from beginning to end and focuses on those issues and concerns connected with mentoring that have previously been neglected. The book is intended to help the mentor secure the benefits of mentoring while eliminating the uncertainties and avoiding the pitfalls.

HOW THE BOOK IS ORGANIZED

Each chapter of this book isolates an important aspect of mentoring. Chapter 1 examines the benefits of mentoring for both the organization and the mentor. Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 tackle the issues of selecting

protégés, beginning and ending the relationship, structuring a mentoring relationship that works, and mentoring women and minorities. Chapter 6 explains what it takes to make mentoring really work in the organization.

In writing *Executive Mentoring*, we have tried to deal directly and succinctly with the myths and issues of each topic, and to propose straightforward, practical strategies for avoiding and overcoming the myths and issues found when top-level executives mentor. Where we have strayed from the format of myths, issues, and strategies, it is because it does not apply.

The book focuses on strategies—what you *can* and *should do* to mentor effectively. However, it makes no pretense of telling everything there is to know about mentoring. We have attempted to write in plain English and to make our ideas clear. We hope we have succeeded.

The book is dedicated to the mentors and protégés who openly shared their thoughts and perspectives, and willingly revealed their experiences and those of others. It is this group of people who raised the myths, identified the problems, verified the strategies we posited, and tossed out the ones that just didn't work. To them we owe an enduring debt of gratitude. We hope you will help us repay this debt by sharing with us those experiences and strategies that work for you.

Chapter 1

WHY MENTOR?

Mentoring is currently accepted as an extremely effective means of identifying and promoting talent in all types of organizations. Mentoring builds employee morale, ensures a pool of talent "ready to step into positions" as needed, establishes a culture of success and productivity, makes the organization attractive as a potential employer, and guarantees organizational renewal. At the same time, mentoring is a time-consuming, energy-intensive activity. Because your time and the time of others in the organization is valuable, it is important to ask: Why mentor? What's in it for you? What's in it for your organization? There are definite benefits that accrue to both you and your organization, benefits that make it worth the time and energy you have to invest.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR THE ORGANIZATION: PERPETUATION AND RENEWAL

The ultimate goal of every organization is ensuring its perpetuation and continued growth. Mentoring provides a vehicle through which an organization can develop one of its most important resources—human potential. When that potential is fully utilized, it contributes significantly to organizational longevity and growth. In the process, there are tangible benefits to the organization.

Benefit 1: Mentoring builds a positive organizational climate.

Part of building a positive organizational climate involves making people in the organization aware of its traditions and culture. They understand where the organization is going, where it came from, and how they and their talents contribute to its continuation.

Building organizational "esprit" is part of that climate. Organizational esprit is the feeling that the organization cares about its

employees, cares about assisting them to realize their potential, and has a stake in them and their future. Mentoring provides a structure through which organizations openly signal to their employees their commitment to promoting potential and their conviction that organizational perpetuation and renewal is tied to employee talent cultivation.

Benefit 2: Mentoring provides a mechanism for rewarding managers.

Managers play a key role in building a positive organizational tradition by consciously promoting talent within their areas of responsibility. By identifying employee potential, they demonstrate their understanding of the role of good supervision—the enhancement of human potential. They also project a managerial style that facilitates organizational growth by facilitating people growth. They demonstrate their understanding of how the cultivation of people ultimately relates to the perpetuation of the organization.

In turn, managers can be rewarded for their foresight in performance evaluations in which they are recognized as individuals who know how to provide the experiences that will best develop their staff. Mentoring becomes a sanctioned supervision strategy for those who choose to engage in it, and you have a way to reward behavior that supports your vision.

Benefit 3: Mentoring builds a pool of ready talent.

It is far more efficient and effective to promote persons whose talents have been recognized and tested rather than those whose performance is uncertain. And, while nothing is ever certain, you are much less likely to make an unwise choice when choosing among people whose skills and abilities have been tested and proven.

Mentoring provides one vehicle for recognizing and testing the talent within the organization and affords a low-risk opportunity to search out persons beyond the traditional pool.

In addition, there is a good deal to suggest that within most organizations there is a wealth of untapped, underutilized talent. Such talent may have been overlooked because the people who possess it do not fit the traditional image of people who make it to the top. Because there is a natural tendency to seek out persons who are similar to the individuals they are replacing, persons who are dissimilar tend to be excluded from consideration, even though they have the talents and abilities needed for

the position. This can be true of women, minorities, and even white males who do not fit the traditional image of those at the top.

Mentoring affords you the luxury of searching for talent in all parts of the organization and of putting those employees whom you think might have special abilities in a variety of situations that test both their skills and your intuition. It also allows you to make judgments based on performance, without the pressure of making permanent placements.

Mentoring enables you to expand the pool and test the potential of a variety of persons within the organization, without substantially altering the existing organizational structure. Having a pool of ready talent to step in as needed ensures continuity and perpetuation of the organization.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU

As advantageous as mentoring is to the organization, there are just as many benefits for the top-level executive who mentors. Six personal benefits are realized by the mentor.

Benefit 1: Mentoring makes you feel good.

First and foremost, it feels good to help other people realize their potential and move into positions that utilize that potential. As corny as that may sound, in top-level executive positions, personal satisfactions are often hard to come by. Helping someone move up can provide you with just such satisfaction.

Benefit 2: Mentoring makes you look good.

You look good when you are seen as having the ability to identify, encourage, and promote talented individuals. Mentoring makes you look even better when you are able to locate talent in unexpected places and people.

Benefit 3: Mentoring supports your image as a visionary.

In mentoring and in encouraging mentoring by other key executives, you add to your image as a visionary—an executive with a definite plan for the organization. It says that you are looking toward the future and systematically preparing for it. It says you groom successors who can ensure continuity of the vision beyond your leadership.

Benefit 4: Mentoring demonstrates what you value.

Mentoring gives you a way to demonstrate, not merely tell, what you expect and value. The behaviors you model become standards of behavior for others in the organization. Mentoring signals that you value good quality performance, and that such performance will be recognized and rewarded.

Benefit 5: Mentoring pays dividends.

Mentoring gives you access not only to the current connections and networks of your protégés, but also to those that your protégés will have in the future. These extended connections allow you access to channels of information and support previously closed to you. There is great benefit to you personally in extending your networks.

Protégés feel honored and grateful for participating in the mentoring process with you. This gratitude translates into a sense of indebtedness that the protégé feels is never fully repaid. These are the very people likely to assume positions like yours, remember you, and consider you when advantageous opportunities come along—opportunities such as appointments to corporate boards, consultancies, and nominations for other high-level positions.

Benefit 6: Mentoring opens channels of communication.

At your level in the organization, people tend to filter what they say to you, and the way they say it. Often they tell you only what they feel you want to hear. It is not comfortable, not considered safe to tell an executive that there are problems and dissatisfactions within the organization.

Because you and your protégé like and trust each other, there is no need for such a filtering system. The protégé feels comfortable bringing problems and issues to your attention. Mentoring thus establishes an upward flow of communication that might not otherwise exist. This line of communication is not to be confused with gossip. Rather, it is a legitimate way for you to become aware of what is really going on in your organization.

The benefits of mentoring to you and your organization are clear and compelling. This is not to suggest that mentoring is without its costs. However, the benefits far outweigh those costs.

The chapters that follow examine the elements of the mentoring process and how to make it work in your organization.

Chapter 2

SELECTING THE PROTÉGÉ

Mentoring is not a new concept for top-level executives. Rather, it is something that CEOs have engaged in for a long time. Yet the process for selecting protégés has tended to be informal and unstructured. In order to maximize the benefits to the organization and to you, it is important to consciously deal with the myths, issues, and strategies that underlie protégé selection.

MYTHS

Basically, there are three myths that surround protégé selection.

Myth 1: You don't have to look for protégés.

There is a prevailing belief that if there is talent in an organization, you do not have to go out of your way to find it—it finds you! The myth is that talent is easily recognized, like cream rising to the top, and if not obvious, it does not exist. If you work from this assumption, the process of selecting protégés requires little conscious effort on your part.

It is true that good people often emerge from this informal, unstructured process. However, this process does not ensure that the most talented people will emerge. If you wait for talent to find you, you may miss people who operate in ways that do not draw attention to themselves, or who cannot be observed easily because they lie outside your immediate circle in the organization.

Myth 2: Any executive can and should mentor.

There is a belief that mentoring comes naturally to anyone in an executive position, that the individual has the skills necessary to develop other people. We may like to think this is the case; however, some executives are uncomfortable with this kind of intimate relationship or are not interested in mentoring. Furthermore, while they themselves may be excellent at their job, they are not adept at developing the skills of others. Despite the importance and value of mentoring, not everyone can or should do it.

Myth 3: You must select the "right" person.

There is a tendency to believe that one cannot afford to make a mistake in the selection of a protégé, that selecting protégés is the same as choosing the right person for a particular position. Choosing the right person is critical in filling a position, and making an unwise choice does reflect on your judgment. However, picking a protégé is not necessarily related to filling a particular position. Distinguishing between promotion and mentoring affords you the luxury of measuring the skills and abilities of the protégé in a variety of situations, and then determining where, or if, those skills and abilities match the needs of the organization.

Implicit in the process of mentoring is the notion that not all protégés make it. The process itself is a way to "pick winners."

ISSUES

Beyond the myths there are some real and important issues related to the selection process that affect the organization and the mentoring relationship. If left unrecognized and unaddressed, these issues can sabotage the benefits of mentoring.

Issue 1: There is a tendency for selection to be equated with promotion. Having been selected, protégés are likely to anticipate that promotion will result. Others in the organization also believe that promotion will naturally follow selection.

This perception contradicts the central nature of mentoring, which is designed to explore the potential of an individual without prior com-

mitment. Selection and promotion are two different processes. While they bear some relationship to one another, confusing them or allowing them to be confused in the minds of others interferes with the aims of each process—testing out in mentoring and choosing the right person in promotion. The individual who is mentored may well be promotable, when and if a position is available. However, this may not necessarily be the case.

Issue 2: The most appropriate time to mentor is in anticipation of an open position. Thus, mentoring occurs when there is a position to be filled or tests potential in relation to a particular position.

As indicated above, this assumption confuses two different processes—mentoring and promotion. Realistically, you can choose to "test" the potential of a protégé when a particular position is imminent. This may not, however, be the most efficient or effective way to operate. The pressure of mentoring in order to fill a vacancy makes it more likely that choices will be limited, or that you will end up with the wrong person or no person at all for the position.

Furthermore, mentoring only when you have a vacant position denies you information about the abilities of your employees and where best to use them. Mentoring without a specific position in mind provides you with an effective avenue for obtaining a broader base of knowledge about your employees' abilities, thus giving you a ready pool of "knowns" from which to choose.

Issue 3: There is a tendency to select protégés who are easily identifiable because they look and act like those who have traditionally held top positions in the organization. There is a corresponding tendency to overlook the talent and potential that is less obvious.

In selecting protégés, competence and potential are generally considered to be the sole criteria. However, because the choice reflects on the mentor's judgment, other factors influence the selection process. Mentors weigh how others in the organization will accept the protégé, how well the protégé is likely to perform, and how successful the protégé may ultimately become. Given the uncertainties of the situation and the risk to the mentor, there is a tendency to choose protégés who are perceived to be accepted and acceptable to everyone, who are like those who reach top positions in the organization, and, therefore,

who are likely winners. While it may seem reasonable and instinctive to do this, there is a danger to the organization in following this practice exclusively. In not widening the search to include less traditional protégés, you overlook a vital source of talent and potential and limit the possibilities for capitalizing on different perspectives, new ideas, and even innovative strategies for the organization.

STRATEGIES

There are several sure-fire strategies you can use to counteract the myths surrounding protégé selection and to deal effectively with the issues involved.

Strategy 1: Make it clear that not all executives are expected to mentor.

Let people in the organization know that mentoring is important and encouraged, but that you recognize not everyone will be comfortable with the process. Consequently, those who mentor will be recognized and rewarded, but there will be no penalty for not mentoring.

Strategy 2: Consciously search for talent throughout the organization.

You want the best people you can get working throughout your organization. Getting the best means searching widely for people with talent and potential. Few would argue that talent comes in many forms—male, female, Black, white, Hispanic, persons with disabilities, and so on. Aggressively identify and select a wide range of potential protégés, and urge others to do the same. Make it clear that as far as you and the organization are concerned there is room for diversity. Furthermore, search talent out; do not wait for it to approach you.

Strategy 3: Deal up-front with criteria used in protégé selection to avoid morale problems.

Share with everyone in the organization how and why a particular person was chosen, what commitments do and do not exist, and what will happen during and after the mentoring situation. Lack of information can lead to misunderstandings, charges of favoritism, and feelings

of jealousy and inadequacy. Obviously, if enough people in the organization are mentoring or being mentored, there will be less need for explanation and less room for misunderstanding.

Strategy 4: Provide training on how to select protégés.

Teach executives the following:

- how to look widely throughout the organization for talent
- what criteria to use in selecting protégés
- mentoring and promotion are two separate processes
- they are not mentoring for specific positions
- they should expect a certain number of "failures" (protégés who turn out not to have the talents required), and that this is evidence that the process is working

Chapter 3

BEGINNING AND ENDING THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

In relationships, beginnings and endings are often the most difficult to deal with. Once the relationships are established, however, they become comfortable, easy, and enjoyable. The benefits are clear to both parties. The roles and expectations are defined and a sense of purposefulness sustains the affiliation.

At first, associations tend to be awkward and uncertain. All the things to be decided lie ahead. How they will work out is unclear. Knowing whether you are making a mistake in undertaking them is yet to be determined. As a result, the possibilities for misunderstanding between mentor and protégé are great.

Mentoring relationships must end at some point. The ending of a relationship can be unpleasant. Often, we just do not think about the relationship ever ending; therefore, we fail to plan for its end. A relationship may die a slow, lingering death or it may be killed abruptly through disagreement or an act of betrayal. And, while you have accomplished the goals that initially brought you together, the history and personal attachment may interfere with both you and the protégé letting go. These possibilities make ending the relationship potentially awkward, uncomfortable, and extremely difficult. Therefore, in any mentoring relationship, you should recognize the potential difficulties of these two points in the relationship. Becoming aware of the myths and issues and developing strategies for dealing with them will probably reduce the awkwardness and allow you to manage the beginning and ending of the relationship more effectively.

MYTHS

There are essentially two myths surrounding the beginning and ending of a mentoring relationship.

Myth 1: There is one correct way to initiate the mentoring relationship.

There are conflicting beliefs about the etiquette of approach, and the conflict makes the notion of a "right" way an operational nightmare. Some believe the protégé should approach the mentor and express a desire to be mentored—that this shows the initiative of a "comer." Others think that this shows the protégé to be overeager and aggressive, and that the protégé should wait for her or his talents to be recognized by the mentor.

If the protégé and mentor operate from the same beliefs, there is every likelihood that the relationship will be established. On the other hand, if they operate from different beliefs, there is little likelihood that the relationship will ever be established. In the latter case, the chance to begin a mentoring relationship beneficial to both parties and the organization may be lost over a relatively insignificant matter.

Myth 2: Everyone understands the roles, expectations, and outcomes of the mentoring relationship.

There is an implicit assumption that the roles, expectations, and outcomes of a mentoring relationship are known and understood. Therefore, there is no need to discuss them. A related, unexamined assumption is that the same roles, expectations, and outcomes are common to all mentoring relationships. Both assumptions are unfounded.

You cannot assume that everyone has the same understanding of mentoring roles, expectations, and outcomes. Indeed, it is far more reasonable to assume that each participant has different understandings and that these different understandings will lead to misunderstandings. Further, you cannot assume that there is a common set of roles, expectations, and outcomes for all mentoring relationships. Rather, they are specific to each mentoring relationship.

ISSUES

There are three issues that initially influence the mentoring relationship.

Issue 1: Decide whether or not to mentor.

Even though you may be committed to the idea of mentoring, you must decide if this is the right time for you to do it. The timing, situation, or even the person may not be right. Moving into a relationship that you have not fully thought through or found to be acceptable is likely to create difficulties both for you and the protégé. Deciding whether or not to mentor is a decision to be made, not a foregone conclusion.

Issue 2: To increase the likelihood of a successful relationship, both the mentor and protégé should benefit from the relationship.

In mentoring, the benefits to the protégé are widely understood and obvious. That the mentor should gain as well is a less widely understood notion.

Obviously, a mentor does gain personal satisfaction from helping someone else. However, when there is something else that the mentor wants or can gain, the mentoring relationship is enhanced. The "something else" may be as simple as information or access to the protégé's networks.

Issue 3: Ending the mentoring relationship can be very difficult.

Mentoring involves an intimate relationship built up over time and experiences. It has no specific or natural ending, and it may continue indefinitely, if both parties desire it. However, it is just as likely that the protégé or mentor will want, perhaps need, to end the mentor-protégé relationship. The relationship may end more comfortably if there is a physical separation, e.g., one of you goes to a different organization. However, this is not always an option. Often the mentor and protégé must either plan an ending or invent one out of need. Either way, such endings may not be easy or comfortable.

STRATEGIES

There are a number of strategies to assist you in anticipating and overcoming the difficulties of beginning a mentoring relationship.

Strategy 1: Think carefully about whether or not you should get involved in a mentoring relationship.

Consider what will be required of you in terms of time, effort, and openness. Consider what you have to gain from the relationship.

Consider whom you will be mentoring and how you feel about that person. Weigh the costs and benefits before committing yourself, and be prepared to say "no" if the situation warrants it.

Strategy 2: Be open about who approaches whom.

Be willing to consider a relationship with someone who approaches you with the wish to be mentored. At the same time, take the position that you will actively look for visible and hidden talent. Either way you have a greater chance of finding the talent that is there.

Strategy 3: Before beginning the relationship, clearly define the roles, expectations, and outcomes for each of you.

Spelling out the roles, expectations, and outcomes helps you structure a framework within which the relationship can function successfully and openly.

Strategy 4: Plan for the end of the relationship.

Understand that the relationship will end at some point in the future. Build in check points for determining whether to end the relationship or renew it.

Strategy 5: Prepare for a change in roles.

Look for the point at which the protégé is moving from a role as a subordinate to a role as a colleague. At that point, you must decide whether to change your role from superior to colleague or to end the relationship.

Strategy 6: Expect your protégé to move on to "bigger and better things."

The ultimate goal of mentoring is successful career advancement. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect your protégé to move on to bigger and better things. It proves you have done a good job—one of which you can be justifiably proud.

Chapter 4

STRUCTURING THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

Mentoring has a greater likelihood of becoming comfortable, easy, and enjoyable once the myths and issues of beginning and ending the relationship have been worked through. However, even a thoughtful beginning does not guarantee that the relationship will automatically become comfortable. The strategies that follow allow you to structure a comfortable, effective relationship.

STRATEGIES

Strategy 1: Identify and plan specific experiences for the protégé.

While following you around may well provide interesting information and insights, it does not guarantee that the protégé will learn what needs to be learned, or that you will learn what you need to know about the protégé. Thus, carefully planned experiences and activities must be identified. Both you and the protégé need to be active participants in determining these experiences and activities. It is not necessary, or even desirable, to design the experiences and activities for the total duration of the relationship. Rather, they should be planned in segments that allow for their systematic evaluation and replanning over the course of the relationship.

These experiences and activities should have clearly defined purposes and tasks that allow the protégé to have real responsibilities and play a valid role. For the protégé, nothing can undermine the relationship more quickly than an ambiguous role and trivial responsibilities.

Strategy 2: Challenge the protégé.

Provide challenges and tests that stretch protégés so that you can evaluate their potential. Stretching protégés means placing them in situations that require them to demonstrate skills that are requisite for higher-level positions. It also ensures that by the end of the relationship, or even before, you will have thoroughly tested the protégés and can speak confidently about their skills, abilities, and potential.

Strategy 3: Legitimate the protégé.

The protégé must have a legitimate role and status if the goals of mentoring are to be realized. This signals to others in the organization that the protégé has a place—a rightful place—and brings your endorsement to this new role. This action also signals that mentoring itself is important, that you value the person and the process.

You legitimate the protégé by announcing openly and up front that a mentoring relationship is being established, who the protégé is, why she or he was selected, what will and will not happen as a result of the mentoring, and how you expect this person to be treated. A single announcement is insufficient to provide legitimization. It is only the first step. Each time you include protégés in a new organizational context, you must reidentify who they are and why they are there, signaling the importance you ascribe to mentoring.

Above all, reject any attempts to undermine the protégé's position. The protégé should not be asked to act as "gofer" or to do things others in the situation would not be asked to do.

At first glance, the issue of the protégé's status may appear to be a relatively small matter. After all, protégés must do their share of unattractive and menial tasks. Granted protégés will do their fair share of these; however, these tasks should not be played out in the public arena where the protégé's status will be compromised. Publicly at least, protégés need to experience what it is like to be legitimate, albeit junior, members of the groups for which they are in training.

Failure to legitimate the protégé in the organization or to ensure a viable status undermines the entire mentoring process, leads to misunderstanding by others, and lessens the likelihood that the goals of the relationship will be achieved.

Strategy 4: Provide open, honest feedback to the protégé.

The essence of mentoring is the realization of potential. This requires frank, specific information about performance, manner, and a whole

host of related factors. Mentors have to be ready to provide critical feedback about protégés' behavior, work performance, dress, manner, handling of situations, and the way in which they are perceived by others. This critical feedback must be specific and honest and should deal as much with strengths and positive attributes, if possible, as it does with weaknesses and areas in need of improvement.

Since the feedback is designed to help the protégé recognize skills and talents and improve them, it should involve not only the identification of the appropriate and inappropriate, but also information on how to alter inappropriate behavior. Open, honest feedback on a regular basis gives protégés the information they need about themselves in the organization.

Strategy 5: Tell protégés where they stand.

One dimension of feedback that is often neglected involves telling protégés where they stand—how they are doing, whether they are meeting your expectations, and if they are showing what it takes to move up.

It is all too easy to assume that the protégé will know what you think without your saying anything. This assumption can seriously damage the mentoring process. Protégés do better when they have no doubts about where they stand and how you perceive them.

Strategy 6: Work toward a relationship in which the protégé will feel free to ask questions and give you information.

It goes without saying that protégés will benefit in proportion to their comfort in asking questions of the mentor. In this way, they learn things they may need to learn at a time when they have demonstrated a readiness to learn them.

It also gives the mentors information about where protégés are in their thinking and learning. Further, if protégés feel comfortable sharing information, the mentor has a line of communication to other levels in the organization. This is not to suggest that protégés should become informants, nor is it an invitation to gossip. Rather, the communication between mentor and protégé becomes a vehicle for sharing needed information.

Strategy 7: Debrief the protégé.

There is a good deal more happening in a particular situation than appears on the surface, and organizations are more than the sum of

these situations. Each organization has its own culture with elaborate, unwritten rules that govern how things get done and what is valued. Furthermore, individuals bring to the organization their own values, codes of conduct, and agendas. A clear understanding of these factors and the part they play in particular situations can only occur if you translate them for the protégé.

Therefore, following each major meeting or situation, debrief the protégé—interpreting why you did what you did; your analysis of the players and their stake in the game; what the hidden agendas were, yours as well as others; and how successful you thought you and the other players were in the situation.

While it may not be easy or comfortable to do this, because it asks you to be not only open but also revealing, it is vitally necessary for your protégé. Without this, the protégé will never fully understand what is going on in ways that can translate into future action.

Strategy 8: Act as a career counselor.

In mentoring, there is a fine line between serving the needs of the organization and serving the needs of the protégé. Sometimes what is good for one is good for the other, but not always.

As a mentor you need to consider what is best for the protégé, not only the organization. It may be that you even go so far as to advise the protégé to accept a position outside the organization because it really does fit better with a sound, long-range plan or because the protégé's future is limited in the organization. Conversely, you might advise the protégé to stay with the organization because it best fits the protégé's long-range career plan and/or because of your understanding of the organization's future direction.

You might find it hard to decide what course of action is best for the organization and the protégé, and there are no hard and fast rules to guide you. However, you owe it to the protégé to make it clear how you see the options, so that the protégé can make a wiser decision.

Strategy 9: Include the protégé in the "business" of socializing.

Socializing plays a critical role in the business of every organization. It is a way for associates who work with one another in the formal structure to get to know one another informally. Through socializing, associates build bonds of understanding, develop the shorthand language that makes communication easy, and develop vehicles for

debriefing formal situations. Furthermore, informal socializing provides the means for making contacts and extending one's networks. Obviously then, involving the protégé in the "business" of socializing is vital to the mentoring process. This is where the protégé acquires insights, develops a sense of what it is to belong, and gains sponsored entry into valuable networks.

Socializing in the mentor-protégé relationship is a delicate issue. Decisions must be made concerning whether or not to socialize and, if so, how much and in what context. Oversimplifying the issue, there are three types of socializing: business-related, nonbusiness-related, and that which is a little of both.

Obviously, the more opportunities you have to get to know one another, the more the mentoring relationship is enhanced. The importance of business-related socializing makes it necessary to include the protégé as much as you can comfortably manage. However, it is not necessary to involve the protégé in what is clearly nonbusiness socializing. This kind of socializing is optional.

When it comes to socializing that fits into neither category, you will have to use your own judgment to decide whether or not you want to include the protégé, keeping in mind your need for comfort and the protégé's need to learn.

Regardless of which decisions you make about socializing, it is important for the mentor and protégé to have regular, naturally occurring, unstructured time together—time when there is no agenda and in which both can communicate in a casual way.

Strategy 10: Don't get "involved" with the protégé.

Emotional entanglement is one of the most difficult and delicate issues in mentor-protégé relationships. When mentoring works, it is an intimate relationship and it is potentially easy to have it go beyond purely professional borders. One of the rules you learned on the way up will serve you in good stead: don't become sexually involved with anyone you work with and don't let anyone get involved with you. Emotional entanglement is professionally disastrous to both parties. In cross-gender relationships, you will have enough to do silencing the rumors about you and the protégé without adding fuel to the fire.

Strategy 11: Help the protégé become a colleague.

The mentoring relationship is essentially paternalistic in nature. Protégés tend to see themselves as learners and mentors as teachers, and both

tend to act accordingly. This division of roles is especially true in the early stages of the relationship. As a result, mentors and protégés may never be able to see themselves as colleagues or equals. Yet, developing colleagues is the ultimate goal of mentoring. This may not happen unless you teach and encourage the protégé to become a colleague. You must be aware of protégés' reluctance to presume they are colleagues and your own possible reluctance to accept them as such. Encourage their development as colleagues while concentrating on your own ability to let go of the old role and move into a new one.

Strategy 12: Give it up if it doesn't work.

For whatever reason, the mentoring relationship sometimes just does not work out. If you have given it your best shot, made an honest effort to make it work, and it still does not, you have to be willing to "kiss it off." Deal openly and honestly with the protégé, explaining why you are ending the relationship, and then put it aside.

If a mentoring relationship happens not to work, be willing to try again, remembering that mentoring, when it works, is extremely beneficial to you, the organization, and the protégé.

Chapter 5

MENTORING WOMEN AND MINORITIES

In the past, women and minorities have tended to be underrepresented in higher levels of organizations and overlooked when identifying those with competence and potential to advance. With increasing numbers of women and minorities moving into managerial positions and the corresponding recognition that they possess the ability to advance to the highest levels of organizations, it is clear that they constitute a relatively underutilized source of talent and potential.

While there are problems and issues to be dealt with in any mentoring relationship, when women and minorities are considered for mentoring, distinct questions and concerns are raised. Many of these come from uncertainties about whether the mentoring process is or should be the same as or different than that for others being groomed for advancement. Conscious and unconscious stereotypes and biases can add to the uncertainties. As a top-level administrator, you may not have these uncertainties and questions, but you need to realize that there are others in the organization who will. To fully and most effectively utilize the talent and potential of women and minorities, it is vital for you to ensure that the organization actively confronts and resolves such questions and uncertainties.

ISSUES

Some of the issues to be confronted and resolved follow.

Issue 1: It is difficult for some people to accept a cross-race or cross-gender mentoring relationship. The motives of the mentor and protégé are suspect, and therefore, the relationship is perceived to be other than professional in nature.

Difficulties in cross-race or cross-gender mentoring relationships center in two areas. In cross-gender mentoring, the relationship is often seen as sexual and social in nature. A female protégé may be seen as using her physical attributes to get ahead and the male mentor as succumbing to them. In cross-race mentoring, the relationship may be perceived as a gesture or a reaction to pressure for affirmative action.

The ease with which inappropriate motives are ascribed to either cross-race or cross-gender relationships hurts the mentor, the protégé, and the organization. Stereotypes, gossip, and half-truths work to deny the competence of the protégé and impugn the motives of the mentor. The implication is that the protégé would never have been selected on her or his own merit.

Issue 2: It is considered riskier to mentor a woman or a minority. Your judgment is always "on the line" when you mentor anyone. When you select a nontraditional protégé, your judgment is subjected to even greater scrutiny.

Women and minorities are less likely to be accepted by others in the organization than are traditional protégés. Until there are significant numbers of women and minorities in top-level positions, the tendency to believe that they cannot or will not make it to the top may influence how others see a relationship with them.

Issue 3: Giving critical feedback is often an uncomfortable situation. Giving such feedback to women and minorities may bring added discomfort.

There is a tendency to think that women and minorities are unduly sensitive about feedback. In the face of uncertainty about how they will accept such feedback, mentors tend to filter what they say and how they say it. While this may seem like a kind thing to do, it denies protégés information they need to grow and develop.

Issue 4: Women and minorities tend to be dealt with as representatives of their race or gender rather than as individuals.

Because there are so few women and minorities at the highest levels of organizations, the few who are there stand out physically. As a result, their performance and behavior receive extra attention. They are often held to a higher standard of performance. If their performance or

behavior fails to measure up in some way, it is taken as a sign not only that the individual does not measure up, but that the group the individual represents will perform in similar ways.

STRATEGIES

In mentoring a woman and/or a minority, you follow the same practices you would with any protégé. There are, however, some additional strategies you should use to address the issues related to mentoring nontraditional protégés.

Strategy 1: Develop an organizational attitude that all people need to be considered.

Work at identifying all of the people with talent in your organization. Pay particular attention to women and minorities as potential protégés. Otherwise, the tendency for them to be overlooked will continue.

Strategy 2: Use the same criteria for judging the talents of women and minorities as you would any other protégé.

Do not expect more of women and minorities or less from them, and do not let others get away with using different standards of evaluation. Judge each protégé as an individual, not as a representative of any group.

Strategy 3: Develop clear parameters for the relationship.

From the beginning, openly discuss and decide jointly how you will handle the special problems that arise in mentoring relationships with women or minorities. Do not shy away from the potentially awkward, uncomfortable issues, even though you may believe it inconceivable that you will have a problem about them later. The unresolved issues are the ones most likely to come back to haunt you.

Strategy 4: Establish a definite plan for legitimizing your protégé.

Understand that it requires special efforts to legitimate your female or minority protégé. And you are the only one who can do it. If the mentor openly communicates the protégé's worth and potential—her or his role as well as the nature and purpose of the relationship—it sets the

stage for how the protégé will be treated by others. If the mentor does not, it diminishes the effects of anything the protégé might do and denies both the mentor and the protégé the opportunity to benefit from the relationship.

Strategy 5: Don't assume women and minorities know the rules as you know them.

Playing by the "rules of the game" depends on understanding, not just knowing, what those rules are. There are different rules operating at the highest levels of organizations. Do not assume that any protégé knows these rules. This is especially true for women and minorities who have traditionally not held top positions and therefore may not have had the same opportunities to learn and use these rules. Make it a practice to identify and explain the "rules of the game" to protégés.

Strategy 6: Provide critical feedback about the protégé's performance and behavior.

Overcome any reluctance you, and others, may feel about giving specific, open, honest feedback to women and minorities about their performance and behavior. They, as other protégés, need to know where they stand and how they measure up. It is misplaced sensitivity to deprive them of the information they need to continue to grow.

Strategy 7: Include women and minorities in the "business" of socializing.

Include your female or minority protégé in the full range of professional activities and networks, including social ones. Social interaction is not required, but should not be avoided if, in a similar situation, you would socialize with protégés of the same race or gender.

Strategy 8: Be sensitive to and deal firmly with slurs, offensive comments, and jokes made at the expense of women and minorities.

In the face of these kinds of behaviors, your first thought may be to ignore what is quite obviously inappropriate. However, it is important to make it clear that you disapprove of such behavior. By setting the standard, you clarify your position and expectations.

Strategy 9: Do not allow others to "exceptionalize" your female/ minority protégé.

All too often, when a woman or minority does well, in an attempt to be complimentary, her or his performance is categorized as exceptional. That is to say, it is categorized as different from the way others of her or his race or gender would perform. If you allow the protégé to be exceptionalized, it thwarts your attempts to develop an organizational attitude that talent comes in many packages and that the organization is devoted to identifying and developing it wherever it is found.

The goal of mentoring is the identification of talent. Enlarging the search to include women and minorities can only enhance the mentor and the organization.

Chapter 6

ESTABLISHING AN ORGANIZATIONAL MENTORING PROGRAM

In the preceding chapters, we have explored the myths, issues, and strategies related to "idiosyncratic" mentoring—occasional or even frequent single mentor-protégé relationships. It is clear that these relationships are important and beneficial to the mentor, the protégé, and the organization. And, by following the strategies outlined in previous chapters, many benefits will be realized. However, when all is said and done, the sum of these individual efforts is not as great as what can be realized from establishing an organizationwide mentoring program.

An organizational mentoring program removes chance as a major factor in the twin processes of systematically identifying talent and providing a ready pool of tested talent available to move into positions. Idiosyncratic mentoring relationships may or may not occur, may or may not identify and prepare the talent that is there—an organizational program does.

In leaving the mentoring to chance, the mentor and protégé may well benefit, but the organization is less likely to satisfy its continuing need to maintain a pool of people ready to step in where needed.

Beyond these considerations, organizational programs address two issues that continually arise. Top-level executives often say they do not mentor because they do not quite know how to do it. An organizational program provides a way for all potential mentors in the organization to develop the knowledge and skills needed to mentor. This still does not mean that they will or even should mentor. But, it eliminates not knowing how as a reason for not doing.

An organizational program lessens the aura of favoritism that surrounds idiosyncratic mentoring relationships. When many are in-

volved in relationships and when the organization is focused on promoting talent wherever it is, favoritism is basically no longer an issue.

The aura of secretiveness that surrounds isolated mentor-protégé relationships is also eliminated when it is an organizational function. Mentors and protégés have a built-in support network, and the relationship enjoys greater acceptability.

Organizational mentoring programs also eliminate confusion about the goals of mentoring. They squarely identify the term with the promotion of talent and not other popular uses and misuses of the term. Further, by making it an established part of the organization, there is systematic, sanctioned recognition for the process and the participants.

In short, organizationwide mentoring programs greatly increase benefits to all. For potential protégés, it means more will have an opportunity to have their talents assessed and their abilities legitimated. For mentors, it means their efforts to mentor are recognized and tangibly rewarded. But for the organization, the rewards are even greater and more long-lasting because of the identification of a pool of talent ready to be utilized. Therefore, everyone, even those not directly involved, benefits.

Looking at organizationwide mentoring programs that currently exist helps identify some of the myths that need to be dealt with in establishing your own program.

MYTHS

Myth 1: Altruism alone will make your mentoring program work, incentives are not needed.

We would like to believe that because mentoring is so important and beneficial to the entire organization, everyone will see the benefits and want to mentor, and that the good feelings most people get from helping others will be sufficient reward. However, it is just not true that everyone feels rewarded by helping others. Even those who get satisfaction from mentoring cannot be counted on indefinitely to gain their reward from satisfaction alone. There needs to be a system for rewarding those who choose to mentor others, a system that recognizes the activity, demonstrates its importance, and provides tangible rewards.

Myth 2: Mentoring programs are a way to fix problems—problem employees, the problem of orienting new people, the problems of addressing affirmative action guidelines.

It is not uncommon to consider using formal mentoring programs to address a variety of organizational concerns. Certainly, such programs can often prove effective and visibly demonstrate that you are dealing with the issues. Do use them. However, do not call them mentoring. Reserve this term for programs rewarding talents rather than fixing perceived inadequacies. Using the term mentoring for both kinds of programs causes confusion of intent and results.

Myth 3: Mentors and protégés can be assigned to one another.

Mentoring pairs are often assigned to one another on the basis of a perception of presumed fit, because the mentor holds a position for which the protégé may prove suitable, because they are presumed to have a similar manner and personality, or because the organization would like them to work together. Thus, mentor-protégé pairs are forced or assigned by a person who is not and will not be involved in the relationship. This pairing is usually done with the best of intentions and in the mistaken belief that a third party can determine a match or that anyone can mentor and be mentored by anyone else. Everyone cannot mentor, and only the people involved can decide if it stands a chance of working.

Myth 4: Tight organizational control is required for successful mentoring programs.

Often organizations feel a need to establish specific requirements and activities governing all mentoring relationships. Usually standardized operating procedures are necessary in organizations to ensure that standards are maintained. However, in mentoring relationships, the needs of the relationship are unique to the people involved and the specific requirements and scheduling must be unique to the relationship. Dictating rules, schedules, or activities on an organizationwide basis is inappropriate. Guidelines can be helpful, and training can provide the framework of criteria and possibilities within which the mentoring relationship operates, but the specifics must be left to the

parties involved. This does not mean, however, that you cannot or should not require a system for reporting the schedule and activities worked out in each relationship.

ISSUE

There is one issue of overriding importance in structuring a mentoring program: *you cannot assume that people know how to mentor.* Good intentions, and even high levels of competence, do not necessarily produce good mentors. Mentoring is a highly complex activity involving a multitude of dimensions, both overt and hidden. A potential mentor must be sensitive to these dimensions and prepared to handle them.

Mentoring has to be learned, and it is necessary for the organization to provide the framework within which that learning will happen. A good training program that incorporates follow-up is the most effective way to accomplish this.

STRATEGIES

Once you have decided to establish a formal mentoring program in your organization, consider the following strategies:

Strategy 1: Take the time to make everyone aware that the program is being established.

Explain that it is a system for recognizing their talents and potential and describe how they and the organization will benefit. Be up front about the possible problems and pitfalls, but make it clear that you believe the benefits far outweigh the limitations.

Strategy 2: State your expectations about participation.

Make it clear that you do not expect everyone to participate, but that you do expect everyone to be articulate about the program and to support it.

Strategy 3: Set up training programs for mentors and protégés.

Mentors need to learn how to mentor, including how to select a protégé, establish and maintain the relationship, plan appropriate experiences,

and provide effective feedback. Protégés need to learn how to be mentored, including their roles and responsibilities and the relationship between their expectations and the organization's.

While it is tempting to ask someone within the organization to provide training, it may be better to seek training outside the organization from experienced professionals.

Strategy 4: Be a role model yourself.

Be an exemplar for the organization. Show the way by promoting the "do as I do" attitude. Your contagious enthusiasm will spread.

Strategy 5: Provide a reward system for mentoring.

Each organization has its own structure of rewarding opportunities. Some possibilities for rewarding mentors include special awards, bonuses, merit pay, promotions, and a time allotment for working with protégés. Identify the rewards you intend to use and announce them to the organization.

Strategy 6: Include mentoring as a part of the organization's performance appraisal system.

Criteria related to mentoring should be incorporated into the performance appraisal system. Managers who mentor should be recognized, but there should be no penalty for nonparticipation.

Strategy 7: Establish an expectation that people at the highest levels are responsible for looking for and making recommendations about their eventual replacements.

This process shows that the organization values their judgment and is encouraging them to look for potential in others.

Strategy 8: Build the philosophy underlying mentoring into the hiring process.

Choose people with an eye toward their potential, not just their technical competence. Every person you interview should be considered in terms of her or his potential to move up in the organization. This does not mean that you are only looking for potential managers or that you assume everyone hired will become a manager. Rather, the idea

is that you look at each new employee hired in terms of potential.

In instituting formal mentoring programs, organizations realize much more than the identification of talent. Mentoring builds employee morale, ensures a pool of talent "ready to step into positions" as needed, establishes a culture of success and productivity, makes the organization attractive as a potential employer, and guarantees organizational renewal. In short, it enhances efforts to develop a vital, viable organization.

The strategies identified in this chapter provide guidelines for structuring a mentoring program for your organization. What they do not do is tell you how. The complexities of planning and implementing an organizational mentoring program do not lend themselves to simple itemization. This is, in itself, another book.

Executive Mentoring: Myths, Issues, Strategies hones in on critical questions involved in mentoring: Why should your organization mentor? What is involved in managing the process? Which attitudes and actions should you incorporate to make mentoring attractive and successful for women and minorities? This book exposes the myths that create obstacles to successful mentoring relationships, covers the day-to-day issues, and recommends strategies for effectively managing the process.

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J. Henderson, researcher for the Center for the Study of Mentoring, has spent many years researching the issues that affect organizational mentoring at high levels.

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